

STACKS

# PEQUOT CONSERVATIONIST

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A Tri-Annual  
Newsletter  
Robert F. Kunz, Editor

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## DIRECTOR ON CITIZEN-SCIENTIST COMMITTEE ON PESTICIDES USE

### COMMENTS ON GYPSY MOTH PROBLEM

Dr. Stephen Collins

The gypsy moth problem has been "greatly exaggerated," according to Dr. Stephen Collins, an ecologist and assistant professor in the Science Department at Southern Connecticut State College.

"County agents and agricultural entomologists are competent in the field of agriculture," Dr. Collins said, "but lacking training for dealing with woodlands and their ecology."

The complete text of the statement by Dr. Collins follows:

#### A Nuisance, But -

"Gypsy moths can be a great nuisance in some places in some years, as anyone knows who has had them in his yard. But the problem has been greatly exaggerated by a few county agents and state entomologists whose programs have always relied heavily upon insecticides for insect control. Allegations of great tree mortality unless we spray our woodlands with Sevin have no basis in fact, nor is there compelling evidence of any economic losses.

"Stripped trees do re-grow a new set of leaves in the same growing season and defoliation is usually localized on dry ridgetops where timber values are virtually non-existent. As the only scientist in the state who has investigated the effect of gypsy moth defoliation on trees, I have been unable to find losses caused by defoliation which exceed six per cent. My findings agree with those of scientists in other states. Even six per cent is not high because woodlands not subject to defoliation may lose two per cent of their trees in a single season because of natural forces such as drought, crowding, wind, etc.

#### No Economic Threat Exists

"Foresters have refused to take sides on the issue of spraying because they know that no economic threat exists to our woodlands. Dr. William House, consulting forester to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, has estimated that three times as many trees are lost through failure to apply sound forestry practices (thinning, pruning, etc.) as are ever lost from gypsy moth defoliations.

"One could wish that county agents would promote sound forestry practices as vigorously as they are urging aerial spraying. Before these men can play the role of St. George, they must first create the dragon. In this case, the 'dragon' has been an insect inhabitant of the state for more than half a



century. People lived with it and controlled it long before DDT aerial sprays came into use. Control by their earlier measures can still be most effective around yards and does not pose the problem of persistent residues associated with DDT and other insecticides.

"These measures include scrapping and burning egg masses or swabbing them with creosote with a brush. Also, sticky bands of 'tree tanglefoot' can be attached to shade trees overhanging homes and this will keep gypsy moths from crawling up the trees and dropping on houses.

#### Spray From Ground

"Although we can ignore the gypsy moth in woodlands and suffer no economic harm, naturally we will want to control it in our yards. Egg destruction before mid-April will accomplish this control. If a home owner neglects to destroy egg masses and finds caterpillars suddenly abundant on his grounds, he can still engage a certified tree expert to spray his shade trees. Neighbors who band together have sometimes secured a price as low as \$10 per yard. As one resident of Killingworth noted at a town meeting recently, he could control gypsy moths more cheaply from the ground than he could for the same tax money paid to his town for aerial spraying.

"A few well-intentioned legislators, who have had to rely upon exaggerated predictions of gypsy moth damage have promised to seek funds to subsidize aerial spraying in their towns. Had these same legislators consulted foresters and ecologists whose background and training are based on a thorough knowledge of trees and woodlands, they would realize that they have received their advice from the wrong quarters. County agents and agricultural entomologists are competent in the field of agriculture, but lack training for dealing with woodlands and their ecology.

#### Sevin Potentially Destructive

"Most of the towns in Eastern Connecticut will not be able to afford costly and potentially destructive aerial spraying with Sevin. Although many of these towns are now experiencing gypsy moth infestations for the first time in the moth's long history in Connecticut, they should be comforted by the experience of towns in the western half of the state. Some of those western towns sprayed with DDT, much to the regret of a number when they found dead wildlife, DDT getting into their water supply and into milk because cattle foraged in sprayed pastures. Other towns did not spray and none are 'treeless wastes' nor has the gypsy moth caused any economic losses in the woods. The great economic loss, of course, has been for the more than \$100 million dollars spent attempting to prevent its spread and to control it, all in vain, because it is widespread and over a greater area today than it was 50 years ago. Spraying does not prevent moths from returning in a few years. It does not keep them from spreading because they are widespread and merely erupt in numbers where they have always been present. Money spent on research could be the best investment in gypsy moth control although there is not a single-state-employed ecologist, or entomologist devoting full time to research on this insect.

"A committee appointed by the Governor two years ago made the recommendation to the Legislature which abolished the subsidy for gypsy moth aerial spraying. The committee report noted that the subsidy encouraged much 'needless spraying.' Conservationists opposed the earlier aerial (but not ground) spraying because of repeated instances of damage to wildlife, water supply and milksheds.



### Mass Spraying Unjustified

"Subsequently, a state board of pesticide control was established and did away with the use of DDT in aerial spraying of woodlands, thus vindicating the sound reasons given by the conservationists. When gypsy moths can be controlled by spot ground spraying, there is little justification for mass aerial spraying of thousands of acres of woodlands.

"Even the newer insecticide, Sevin, which has never been tested in Connecticut woodlands for gypsy moth control, enters water supply sources. It does get into milk, contrary to statements of our officials. It has caused drastic losses of stream insects upon which trout depend. It can not be applied on cats under four weeks of age and it cuts yields of apples and adversely affects certain plants. (Boston Ivy, Virginia Creeper.)

"I hope this information will prove of some comfort to readers who are encountering the gypsy moth problem for the first time and don't know what to believe about it or what measures they should be taking. We can ignore this insect in our woodlands and control it in our yards."

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The preceding article is reprinted from the "Connecticut Woodlands" (March-April, 1965) published by the Connecticut Forest and Park Association, Inc.

Editor's Note: We would like to add our whole-hearted endorsement of Dr. Collins' remarks in this article and also our thanks to him and to the other members of the Board of Directors of the Citizen-Scientist Committee on Pesticides Use for their constant and continuing efforts to keep the use of pesticides in Connecticut on a sound ecological basis.

Members of the Board of Directors of Citizen-Scientist Committee on Pesticides Use are: Allan F. Kitchel, Jr., Chairman - Conservationist, Horticulturist; Alexander Bergstrom - Naturalist, Chairman, Conservation Comm., Hartford Audubon Society; Dr. Stephen Collins - Ecologist, Asst. Professor, Science Dept., Southern Conn. State College; Dr. Frank E. Egler - Ecologist, Chairman, Research Development Board, Rightofway Resources of America; Gordon Loery - President, Litchfield Hills Audubon Society, Conservationist at White Memorial Foundation; Dr. Richard Goodwin - Botanist, Chairman, Botany Dept., Connecticut College, President, The Nature Conservancy; Dr. William Niering - Ecologist, Professor, Botany Dept. and Director, the Arboretum, Connecticut College; J. Stanley Quickmire, Jr., - Naturalist, Director, Sharon Audubon Center.

### SUNDAY FAMILY FIELD TRIPS

The remainder of the current schedule of the Sunday Family Field Trips is as follows:

- June 6 - Song Birds, Pequot-sepos Wildlife Sanctuary, Mystic. Leave Science Center 9:45 AM or meet in Sanctuary Trailside Museum at 10:00 AM.
- July 11 - Birds and Ferns, Connecticut College Arboretum, New London. Leave Sanctuary parking lot 9:45 AM or meet at the Arboretum Entrance at 10:00 AM.
- Sept. 12 - Early Migrants, Connecticut College Arboretum. Follow exactly the arrangements for the July 11th trip.



SANCTUARY TRUSTEE OBJECTS TO BAN ON 'SILENT SPRING'

The following letter appeared in The New London Day on May 28, 1965 and is reprinted here as a matter of concern to all our readers:

"To the Editor of The Day:

"It was disturbing to note that the Connecticut Department of Health has placed Miss Rachel Carson's widely known work Silent Spring on its "not recommended" list. Silent Spring is highly regarded by many of our competent and able citizens. It was gratifying to hear of Senator Ribicoff's urging the removal of Silent Spring from the "not recommended" list.

"I have inquired and suggest that other taxpayers also inquire as to why Miss Carson's highly regarded work, Silent Spring, was listed as not recommended, asking the department to reply as to whether the listing was based upon objective criterion or only subjective opinion-type criterion.

"It would seem appropriate for any citizen who feels as I do, that Miss Carson has rendered a highly valuable service to our society, to write to the Connecticut Department of Health urging the removal of her book from the "not recommended" list. They should also request that if it is not to be removed that specific information be given as to the reasons for continuing to condemn the work (for example, are there any claimed inaccuracies or misstatements by Miss Carson).

"One wonders also whether any useful purpose is served by having such a negative-type category as a "not recommended" list in a free, open and progressive society which we are supposed to live in in 1965 America."

/s/ Richard M. Bowers

Editor's Note: We would like to urge our readers to follow Mr. Bowers' suggestion to query the Connecticut State Department of Health regarding this matter.

HUNTER WITH A CAMERA

On June 9th at 8:00 PM, Mr. Wilson D. I. Domer, past President of the Sanctuary will show and narrate his color slides of wildlife taken on a recent trip to the Gulf of Mexico coastal area. A wide variety of wildlife of that area will be shown including the whooping and sandhill cranes - and a surprise. Non-members will be charged a nominal fee.

FERTILIZER

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LAWN SEED

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FLOWER SHEARS

In an effort to supplement the dwindling sale of bird seed during the Spring and Summer months, the Sanctuary has stocked a variety of fertilizers, lawn seed and a few garden tools. We have a large catalog of items from which we can service almost any garden need within one week. Your member discount applies.

ANNOUNCEMENT

On June 22nd, 1965 at 10:00 AM Mrs. Earl Smith will talk to an open meeting of the Groton Garden Club at the Sanctuary on the subject of "Birds". Sanctuary members are welcome.



NOTICE OF THE ANNUAL MEETING

OF THE PEQUOT-SEPOS WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, INC.

To be held on Tuesday, July 13, 1965 at 7:30 PM  
At the Sanctuary's Trailside Museum in Mystic, Conn.

All Sanctuary members are urged to attend.

THAMES SCIENCE CENTER SUMMER PROGRAM

During the months of July and August, the Science Center will offer eight classes in natural science education to members of the Center, the Sanctuary, and to the public. In consideration of the Trial Merger, this program will be offered to Sanctuary members at the member rate. The program is divided into two sessions: July 6 through 30 and August 3 through 27.

The instructors will be Mr. Roy Kennan in the subjects of reptiles, amphibians, fresh water biology and seashore biology; Mr. John Emery in the subject of exploring Nature; and Mr. Robert Kunz in the subject of Conservation Education.

Courses will be offered for grades 1 through 8 as follows:

Exploring Nature will be offered for grades 1 through 8.

Reptiles, Amphibians & Fresh Water Biology will be offered for grades 1 through 6.

Seashore Biology will be offered for grades 4 through 8.

Conservation Education sessions will be offered to all age groups.

Classes will be held from 9:00 to 11:00 AM on Tuesdays and Thursdays or on Wednesdays and Fridays. Appropriate equipment and certificates of completion will be provided under the cost of tuition.

Tuition per Course:      Members      -      \$ 7.00  
   Non-members      -      \$10.00

For specific information, please call the Thames Science Center (443-4295). Registrations close June 19<sup>th</sup>. 1965.

RECREATION - CONSERVATION STICKER

The Secretary of the Interior has announced that \$7.00 is the annual fee for the new Recreation-Conservation Sticker which may be purchased by as many as five million Americans this year. This automobile sticker will allow admission to most designated Federal reservation areas for the year beginning April 1, 1965, and will allow a good saving in admission fees. All proceeds from sticker sales will be set aside in the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Even for those of us who will not have the opportunity to visit many of these Federal areas this year, the purchase of a sticker represents a sound investment in our National Conservation effort and we recommend their purchase. Ed.



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